



Mongolia in Depth

Blue Dot Travel

Go somewhere different





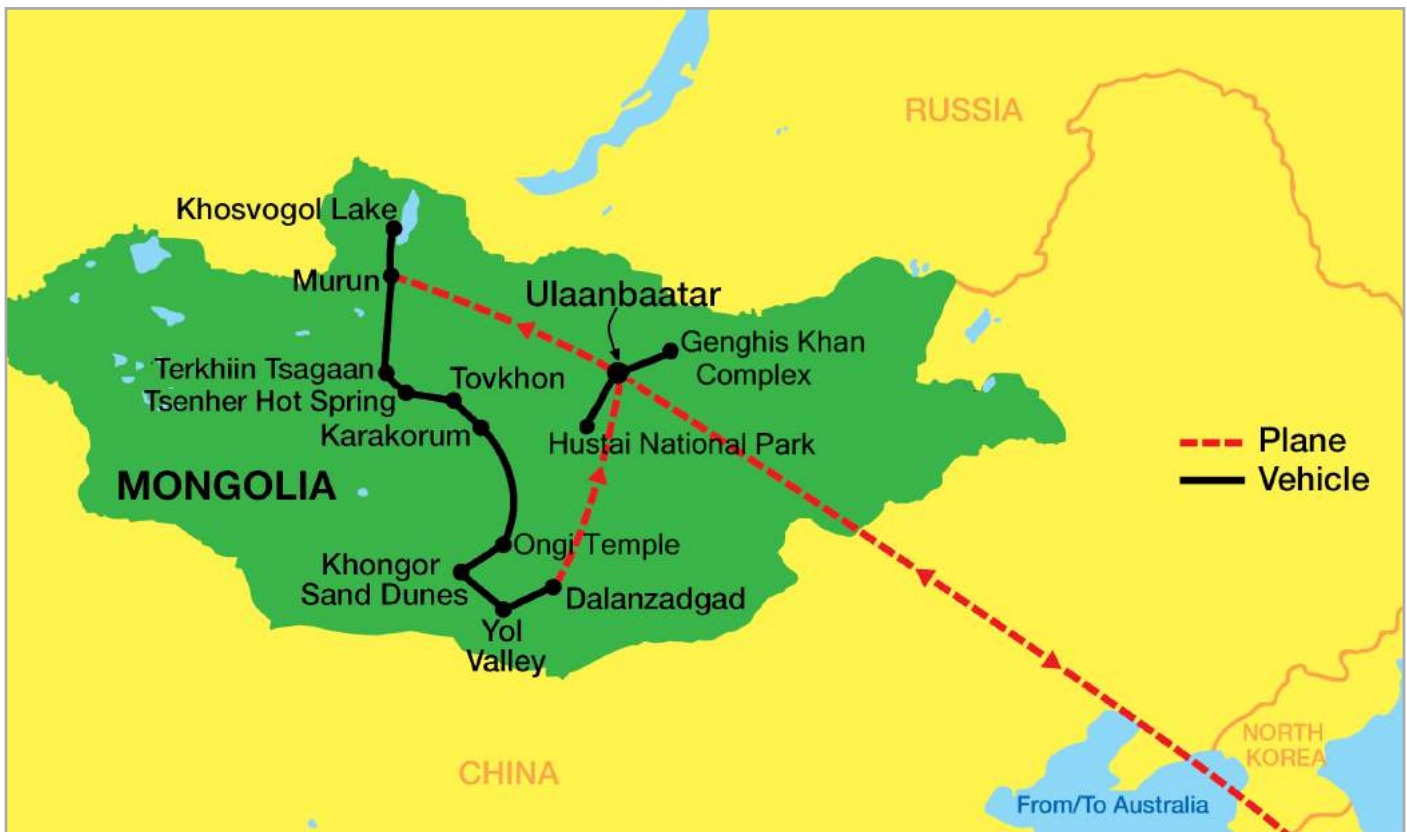
MONGOLIA IN DEPTH

A trip through the Land of the Sapphire Blue Sky is something very unique. If you're looking for a five star type, cushy, comfortable holiday, then Mongolia is probably not for you. If you want to get off the beaten track then Mongolia is unmatched in its wild beauty and rawness. In three weeks you will get a wonderful taste of what this country has to offer. What you will experience, smell, hear, taste and see, will engage all of your senses. Mongolia will be indelibly imprinted on your memory.

Mongolia is one of the world's least-developed, least-populated countries. If you want to see a night sky so clear that you'll be reminded that the galaxy is infinite, or to camp on the edge of a vast steppe covered in chive flowers as far as the eye can see, Mongolia is the place.

Mongolia is a land of extremes. On the road it can take hours of driving before you pass a tiny ger community, a Mongolian on horseback or even another vehicle. Yet in between you are blessed with views of a countryside so stunning that you know you are experiencing it. From the stark Gobi, incredible rock formations and magnificence of Khogoryn Els (Mongolia's largest sand dunes) in the south, the crystal blue lakes and rushing clear rivers of the West,

With a population of only 3 million, roughly half of the country's population is packed into one city, the capital of Ulaanbaatar. Outside of that, Mongolia's largest "cities" only number in the tens of thousands, with a significant portion of those still living the traditional lifestyle as nomadic sheep-herders. Mongolia is a land serene, with a warm and welcoming culture.



Day 1

Departure Australia - Beijing

Depart Australia for Beijing on an overnight flight. *Meals in flight.*

Day 2

Arrive Ulaanbaatar

Depart Beijing for Ulaanbaatar. After clearing immigration, we transfer to your centrally located hotel. Overnight in 4 star hotel for two nights. Welcome dinner tonight at a local restaurant. *Meals in flight/D*

Day 3

Ulaanbaatar City Tour

A later start today after your long flights. Our city tour starts at Sukhbaatar Square, which is the central square named after the revolutionary hero of 1921 Damdiny Sukhbaatar who declared independence from China. You will visit the Gandan Monastery the centre of Buddhism in Mongolia. Here you may experience the monks in worship and see the impressive Golden Buddha Statue of Migjid Janraisig. We will then visit the National Museum which is famous for its wonderful collection of elaborate costumes, hats and jewellery from the main Mongolian ethnic groups. The Museum also houses an exhibit dedicated to the Mongol empire giving you your first insight into the country's long nomadic tradition. Later in the day, time permitting, we will drive to the peak of Zaisan memorial hill to get a fantastic view of the whole city. The balance of the day is open for you to stroll the streets of the city on your own. Overnight at 4 star hotel. *B/D*

Day 4

Hustai National Park

Today we'll visit the Bogdo Khaan Winter Palace Museum, the home of the last Mongolian King, Javzun Damba Khutagt VII. The museum contains a number of Buddhist artworks and the private collection of Bogdo Khaan, composed of gifts from rulers and kings from all over the world. The artworks displayed here were made by top Mongolian, Tibetan, and Chinese master sculptors of the 18th and 19th centuries and represent the gods of Buddhist pantheon. We then leave Ulaanbaatar for Hustai National Park some 90 kms west of the capital. There was a time when it would have been nearly impossible to see a Przewalski's horse (named after Russian geographer and explorer Nikolay Przhevalsky). They had become extinct in the wild in the 1960s because of hunting, expanding agricultural land, and harsh winters. Only two captive groups remained in the world – in zoos in Munich and Prague. In 1992, some of these horses were reintroduced into the wild at Mongolia's Hustai National Park and the herd has been carefully monitored since. Now, there are more than 350 living here. Tonight is your first night in a traditional ger. Whilst the accommodation is basic, this is an opportunity to experience life as the Mongolian nomads live. Overnight in a standard ger camp. *B/L/D*

Day 5

Hustai — Khovsgol Lake

After an early breakfast, we drive to the airport and take the flight to Murun, the centre of the Khovsgol province. From Murun, you will be driven to the base camp at Lake Khovsgol (approx. 70 miles). With an area of 1,012 sq.miles lying near the Russian border, Lake Khovsgol is Mongolia's largest freshwater lake. It is more than 800 feet deep and more than a mile above sea level. The

remainder of the day is at leisure. Driving distance 130 km. Overnight in a standard ger camp for three nights.

B/L/D

Day 6

Khovsgol Lake hiking and wildlife

After breakfast at the camp you will have a full day to explore the breathtaking shores of this beautiful lake. There is ample opportunity to discover the local nomadic lifestyle. You can plan a hike along the shoreline and practice your wildlife photography as there are excellent wildlife habitats especially migratory flocks of birds. There are also opportunities for horse riding near the lake and visiting the yak breeding families and experience their unique lifestyle. *B/L/D*

Day 7

Drive to Murun province

In the afternoon, we will drive back to Murun where will spend the night. Overnight at a local hotel. Driving distance 130 km. *B/L/D*

Day 8

Murun to Terkhiin Tsagaan Lake

Today we travel onto Terkhiin Tsagaan National Park and Khorgo volcano. The lake, birdlife and mountains are now protected within the 77,267 hectare Khorgo-Terkhiin Tsagaan Nuur National Park. The lake, which was formed by lava flows from a volcanic eruption many millennia ago, is excellent for swimming, though a bit cold in the morning - try the late afternoon, after the sun has warmed it. There is a horse trip and trekking available to Khorgo Volcano. Overnight in a standard ger camp. Driving distance 250 km. *B/L/D*

Day 9

Terkhiin Tsagaan Lake to Tsenher Hot Spring

Following breakfast, we will drive to Tsenher hot springs. Along



the way we will stop for a break in the small town of Tsetserleg to visit a monastery museum. We spend tonight in a ger camp where you will be able to soak in the therapeutic waters of the natural hot springs whilst enjoying the view of the surrounding hills. Overnight in a standard ger camp. Driving distance 200 km. *B/L/D*

Day 10

Tsenher Hot Spring to Karakorum

In the morning, we drive to Tuukhun Monastery which was founded by Zanabazar. This attractive landscape is registered as a UNESCO World Heritage site. The Tuukhun Monastery was established by Undur Gegeen Zanabazar in 1654 and was dedicated to religious study and art. It is located on a rocky mountain hill surrounded by forests at an elevation of 2,300 metres above sea level. In 1651, the first religious statesman Zanabazar built a small stony building on the site. The monastery is located in a natural rocky landscape where there is a small cave named the "Mother's abdomen". The Mongols still protect this unique place naming it as

"Mahaga Country". These monuments were created during the war between Khalkh and Uuld when a tunnel was dug through the mountain to form the "Door of Great Pleasure". During the war, legend has it that Undur Gegeen escaped through this tunnel and intentionally blocked the entrance with a massive stone. The monastery was taken under the protection of the state in 1992. We then drive onto Karakorum and arrive late afternoon. Overnight in a deluxe ger for two nights. Driving distance 190 km. *B/L/D*

Day 11

Karakorum

Karakorum was the ancient capital of Mongolia and it was located on the right bank of Orkhon River and on the north-eastern



slopes of the Khangai Mountain. The nomadic city was founded by Chinggis Khan in 1220 and it was not only the capital of the vast Mongolian Empire but the epicentre of trade along the Silk Road. At that time the inhabitants of the city were mostly merchants and craftsmen who came to Karakorum from all over the world. Once Kublai Khan came to the throne he moved the capital of the Mongolian Empire to China, establishing the Yuan Dynasty. Karakorum then lost its importance and in 1379 much of the city was badly damaged during an attack by the army of the Ming Dynasty. Erdene Zuu monastery was built by Avtai Sain Khan on the ruin of the Mongolian capital Karakorum in 1586. It was the first great Buddhist monastery of Mongolia. It is part of the World Heritage Site entitled Orkhon Valley Cultural Landscape. Stones from the ruins of Karakorum were used in its construction. It is surrounded by a wall featuring 108 stupas, 108 being a sacred number in Buddhism, and the number of beads in a Buddhist rosary. The monastery was damaged by warfare in the 1680s, but was rebuilt in the 18th century and by 1872 it had 62 temples and up to 1,000 monks inside. The Erdene Zuu Monastery was taken into state protection and became a museum in 1944. The political climate in Mongolia is changing and Buddhism, previously suppressed, is currently experiencing a resurgence all over the country. Overnight in deluxe ger. *B/L/D*

Day 12

Drive to Ongi Temple

Today you'll drive to the ruins of the Ongi monastery. It was the largest Buddhist centre in the Gobi region. There are two complexes of temple ruins which were built up in the 1780s. During the political repression of the 1930s' these two temples were destroyed and many lamas were executed and imprisoned. We will visit the ruins of the monastery and the reconstructed parts. Overnight in standard ger camp. Driving distance 250 km. *B/L/D*



Day 13 Ongi Temple to Khongor Sand Dune

Today we drive to the famous Khongor sand dunes which are the most important sand

mass of the Gobi Gurvan Saikhan National Park, covering an area of more than 900 square kilometres. It's one of the largest sandy areas of Mongolia. Suddenly standing out from the plains, they are undoubtedly among the most spectacular of the country. The wind continuously blows from north towards west and the dunes can reach breathtaking heights, between 100 and 300 metres at their highest points. Khongor dunes are more than 180 km long and can reach 27 kilometres wide. The inhabitants name their imposing dunes "singing dunes" due to the noise made by the wind when it moves the sand. Beyond the dunes, the steppe extends as far as the eye can see. Khongor dunes have a particular appeal, because they have an impressive combination of colours (the dunes are pale yellow). At the northern end, they are lined with a green luxuriant vegetation band, delimited by a river - the Khongoriin Gol. This river is supplied by subterranean sources and flows along the dunes for a few kilometres forming an oasis in the middle of the desert landscape. Overnight tonight in standard ger camp. *B/L/D*

Day 14 Khavtsgait Petroglyphs

In the morning we drive to the site of the Khavtsgait Petroglyphs. The Khavtsgait Petroglyphs from the Bronze Age (4000-3000 BC) are beautifully carved on many rocks on the top of a sacred mountain. It is easy to find the rock paintings there because they are spread on rocks all around. The area is very rocky and can be slippery to climb, but by carefully following a path up the mountain, you can reach the top to see these beautiful rock paintings. The petroglyphs were carved and painted with motifs consisting of animals, hunting scenes and weapons. They depict various animals related to everyday life of ancient people including deer, bears, wolves and hunters with their livestock. Other paintings depict more domestic scenes of yaks pulling carts and herders on horseback. Overnight in deluxe gers. *B/L/D*



Day 15 Flaming Cliffs

This morning is a rest morning after our long travel days. Our deluxe gers provide an opportunity to relax and take in the serenity of the Gobi

environment. In the late afternoon, we will drive to the Flaming Cliffs. This area was named as 'Flaming Cliffs' by Roy Chapman Andrews, an American explorer who searched throughout the Mongolian Gobi Desert and found dinosaur skeletons and eggs for the first time in Asia. The red cliff gleams with sunlight and can be seen

from far away. We will take a short walk on the ridge of the cliff. Overnight in deluxe gers. *B/L/D*

Day 16 Yoi Valley

After a late check out this morning, we drive to Yoi Valley, which is also known as Vulture Valley. Learn about the local wildlife in the Natural History Museum before taking a gentle hike through the valley to discover their habitats. This valley is nestled deep within the hills and is a safe haven to get away from the desert heat. Some areas of the valley are continually sheltered from the hot sun and consequently the stream freezes over in winter and remains partially frozen until late summer. It is very wide at the entrance and narrows gradually into a remarkable gorge. We will trek into the gorge which is a 2.5 hour round trip and along our way we might see ibex, wild sheep, pica, yaks and vultures. Overnight in deluxe gers. *B/L/D*

Day 17 Flight to Ulaanbaatar

Today we transfer to the Dalanzadgad Airport to board our flight to Ulaanbaatar. After lunch we will visit the newly renovated Dinosaur Museum. The Gobi Desert on the Mongolia-China border is a beautifully desolate area, but millions of years ago, when dinosaurs roamed, it teemed with life. That combination makes it a world-class source of fossils. It's the type of place where you can find protoceratops skulls, dinosaur eggs, and a full skeleton of Tarbosaurus bataar, all of which are on display at this museum in Ulaanbaatar. Overnight at 4 star hotel for next two nights. *B/D*

Day 18 Ulaanbaatar

Today we visit the Zanabazar Fine Arts Museum. The Museum was founded in 1966 and is renowned for the works of G. Zanabazar (1635-1724), which include the statues of Sita Tara, the Five Dhayani Buddhas and the Bodhi Stupa. It has 12 exhibition galleries covering the arts from ancient civilisations up to the beginning of the 20th Century. Following the museum visit, we will visit the 40m high Genghis Khan Horse Statue which is believed to be the highest equestrian statue in the world. There's an elevator that takes you to the observation deck on the top of the horse's head. Built in 2008, the statue is made of 250 tons of stainless steel. In the evening you will be treated to a wonderful display of Mongolian throat singing, musicians, dancers and contortionists followed by your farewell dinner. *B/L/D*

Day 19 Ulaanbaatar - Beijing - Australia

Today is a free morning in Ulaanbaatar to choose what you would like to do. Perhaps visit the Gobi cashmere outlet store, revisit the National Museum, simply walk around the city centre and enjoy the local atmosphere or relax in the wonderful coffee shop next to the hotel called Cafe Bene with free wifi. We catch a bus to the airport in the afternoon before flying onto Beijing and then onto Australia. *B/Meals in flight.*

Day 20 Australia

Arrive back in Australia today. *Meals in flight*